Cubans Find Plague Ironic

HAVANA—In a doughty and salty forward position on the seaside main drive of the capital stands a monument with the following inscription in Spanish:

"The people of the island of Cuba are and by right ought to be free and independent"—Joint Resolution of the Congress of the United States of America of April 19, 1898.

Subsequent U.S.-Cuban history gives the phrase an ironic turn or two, and such are the fortunes of the island that not everyone feels free yet. The plaque is located about midway between the shuttered U.S. Embassy, opened partially by the Swiss to process Cubans departing for the United States, and the Morro Castle, which serves as a prison for many of the country's political prisoners, estimated by Castro to number nearly 20,000.